While a widespread interest and a great attention animate the study of modern Vedanta – the Vedanta of Sankaracharya and other recent scholars and not the Vedanta of ancient Indian Sages and philosophers – much indifference and lack of real interest beset the study of either of Samkhya or of Saiva Siddhanta. This has been mainly due to the dangerous dogmatism and intolerant bigotry of certain class of people in our country. Whatever might be the attitude of our sectarian philosophies towards Samkhya and Saiva Siddhanta, learned European scholars were not to be deterred from their endeavors to seek after truth but having made an immense sacrifice of their time and comforts they have brought to light the complete system of Samkhya and a portion of Saiva Siddhanta by producing faithful translations of works on these philosophies and editing their original texts. Thanks to their inequitable services in this direction, for our eyes are now opened to see the hidden knowledge that had been jealously guarded for many centuries by our own countrymen for fear of losing their prestige and feigned supremacy in all that concerns our life.

It is an acknowledged fact today that, of all the existing systems of thought, Samkhya is the earliest and the deepest fountain of philosophy from which all the numerous streams of knowledge took their rise and flowed continuously up to the present time acquiring in their long course additional supplies of newer ideas from other sources. From Samkhya arose the grandest and the sublimest teachings of Bhagavan Gauthama Buddha – the very essence of the Buddhist religion. From Samkhya was developed the peculiar mystic system of Soul-culture, afterwards elaborated by Patanjali into a perfect treatise on yoga. From Samkhya came into existence physical and metaphysical discussions as are seen in the Upanishads like Kena, Svetaswatara and Chandogya. And it was from Samkhya that the very teachings of Sri Krishna comprised in Bhagavad Gita, the widely read and highly venerated work, came into being. Not to say of the innumerable other cults that derived their fundamental from Samkhya in the medieval and modern periods, almost all the philosophic knowledge of ancient times drew their sustenance from the fertile source of Samkhya. Not alone in the ancient times but even at the present day a study of the Samkhya philosophy is considered to be of the utmost importance to a profound scholarship in the critical learning of Vedic Sanskrit. As for the great regard in which it was held by the sages of the remote past it would suffice to point out that “in the first book of Mahabharata, Narada is said to have taught the thousand sons of Daksha the doctrine of final deliverance from matter, the surpassing knowledge of the Samkhya, and he is reckoned as one of the Prajapatis, or first progenitors of mankind.” And of the rationalistic value of this philosophy no one can better speak than Mr. John Davies, M.A., the able translator of the Samkhya Karika, who, touching on this point says: “The system of Kapila, called the Samkhya or Rationalistic, in its original form, and in its theistic development by Patanjali, contains nearly all that India has produced in the department of pure philosophy. Other systems, though classed as philosophic, are mainly devoted to logic and physical science, or to an exposition of the Vedas. It is the earliest attempt on record to
give an answer from reason alone, to the mysterious questions which arise in every
thoughtful mind about the origin of the world, the nature and relations of man and his future
destiny."

In addition to such opinions of impartial oriental scholars, I venture to lay before you
subsequently certain facts and arguments for taking Samkhya as the only true philosophy
amongst the other five systems – the Nyaya, the Vaisheshika, the Mimansa, the Yoga and the
Vedanta. In the meanwhile, I wish to dwell a little upon a fact of great historical importance.

Samkhya is the oldest philosophy in existence which records the nature and tendency
of the people in the midst of whom it arose. To those of you who are acquainted with the
critical works of such eminent critics as Prof. Dowden, Prof. Minto, Dr. Stopford Brooke and
others, I need hardly say that the work of a great man is like a veritable mirror in which is
reflected the nature and tendency of its times. In the same way Samkhya is the work of its
times. Though the genius of Kapila gave an admirable setting and a definite shape to the
Philosophic tenets that were current in his time, yet it cannot be said that they were freshly
originated and given to the world exclusively by him. Many centuries before the time of
Kapila learned men were occupied in investigating the nature and destiny of the universe and
the mysterious relation in which the human beings stand to each other and to the world. Many
centuries before, men of extensive knowledge and profound reflection were giving currency
to the thoughts which they had matured in their secret dwellings in forests and mountain
caves concerning the misery of humanity and the way in which to bring about an eternal
deliverance of the soul from evil. These doctrines that were lying scattered here and there
were brought into one coherent whole and made up into a complete system of thought by the
great intellectual capacity of Sage Kapila. The old proverb ‘that Rome was not ’built in a
day’ indicates the long and slow process through which a system must pass before it will
reach its final completion. The philosophy of Samkhya must, likewise be considered as a
typical mark of its time, as a monument constructed out of the crude materials supplied by the
intellects of bygone ages. Professor Max Muller has, with great exactness of detail, spoken of
the philosophic activity of the ancient day Indians in his last great works. ‘The six Systems of
Indian Philosophy’ and I request you all to refer to it for an elaborate account of this point.
Suffice it for my present purpose to say that Samkhya is the only system of philosophy which
as a flaming torch throws a flood of light on the earliest mental condition of our forefathers
and opens to our view the hitherto concealed secret of their head and heart. And to a right
understanding of the ancient Indian thought nothing can help us better than the system of
Samkhya.

But many of us – nay even all of us – are prone to attach great importance to a
particular religion or to a particular form of philosophy to which we have closely adhered
from our young days and to view everything else from our own stand point in face of all
difference and disagreement that exists between ours and that of others. Recently there has
arisen a tendency in the modern Vedantists to reduce everything they come across in the
realm of philosophy to the system of Sankaracharya or to treat them in utter disregard if they
do not agree with their modern Vedantic thought. This spirit of antagonism or die prejudice
on the part of our Indians is sure to lead us into errors of an irremediable character and
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impede the progress and onward growth of our intellectual faculty. To accomplish what other
nations have achieved in the social, moral and intellectual conditions of life, it is absolutely
necessary that we should cultivate that openness of mind to receive truth wherever it is found
and that unbiased state of reasoning to carry on an interesting inquiry into subjects other than
that we own.

Now, as regards the tenets of Samkhya, it may briefly be stated that an inquiry of the
world and an inquiry of the Self constitute its two important elements of study. The object
of this study is to deliver the Soul from the clutches of misery, pain and evil, which arise as a
natural consequence of its contact with matter.

THE WORLD.

To take up first its interesting study of the nature and condition of the world or
cosmos. This world which is an immediate object of our knowledge is in our experience
perceptibly distinguished from soul by its being built up by particles, of a substance that has
not got in it that particular kind of action called intellectuality. On an experimental study, this
world, this entire phenomenon of the universe, reveals to our intellect two of its phases, of
which, one is perceived by our five senses and the other is inferred to exist from correct
methods of reasoning. Of these two phases, one that is perceived by the senses is called as
Vyakta or manifested and the other that is inferred to exist as Avyakta or unmanifested state
of Prakriti. And again, the one state forms the fundamental cause of the other.

We know that this world both organic and inorganic is a conglomerated body of the
five primary elements; ether, air, fire, water and earth. We know also by chemical analysis
that every fragment of this material world is ultimately resolvable into substances of a much
finer character. These finer substances are so minute in size that it is extremely difficult for
our physical eyes to see them except with the help of a microscope. Sometimes these are not
perceivable even with the aid of a microscope, since they attain to gaseous state. Unseen
though they be, yet we arrive at correct conclusions with regard to their real existence. When
a piece of sulphur is pulverized into the finest particles of dust and blown up into a large glass
vessel, these particles do not become visible to our naked eyes unless we resort to the aid of a
microscope. Again when the same sulphuric atoms are converted into an invisible gas, they
are not seen even through the means of a magnifying glass; yet we are confident of their
existence in the glass since we can know them by other means of ascertainment, namely, by
weighing the whole in a balance before and after the experiment. There are still subtler and
subtler states of sulphur than the gaseous one, which cannot be cognized even in this
experimental way but of which we are certain from the law of indestructibility of matter,
proved beyond doubt by the methods of experimentation. It would, therefore, be manifest that
Sage Kapila was fully justified in attributing to matter two kinds of state of which one is
ultimately subtler, and the other a perceptibly grossest.

Avyakta or the unmanifested state constitutes the primordial or first cause of this
whole manifested universe. Both these Avyakta and Vyakta conditions are incidental to
matter. I see much truth in the nebular hypothesis of western astronomers, and it is not
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difficult to see a nearer approach of it to the oldest conception of our Sage Kapila regarding
the primitive condition of this world.

Such a grand conception of the reality of the world whether manifested or
unmanifested is as old as the civilization of our forefathers and we as their rightful
descendants are bound to take it as the basic principle of all our succeeding processes of
thought, especially when we find it corroborated by modern chemical experiments and
scientific researches. But sadly we are not permitted to follow in their footsteps. In the
medieval period, that is, in the eighth or the ninth century of the Christian era, when the
Buddhist and the Jain religions had fallen into decay, a new reaction set it in the atmosphere
of our Indian thought, and a newer and quite incorrect notion about the nature of the world
sprang up upsetting the traditional accounts of our old philosophers. What is that new and
fantastic notion? It is nothing but that which you are much acquainted with; nothing but
the notion that this visible and tangible universe is purely of an illusory character; nothing but
what we all see, hear, taste, touch and smell is a mere zero, a sheer phantasmagoria. The great
Sankaracharya – great indeed he is – was the first, I presume the very first originator of this
notion of illusion, this nothingness of the world and if I may be permitted to say, was the first
to stop the wholesome current of ancient teachings at its middle and give them a new turn to
run into a stagnant pool of muddled thought.

So far as my knowledge is concerned, I could confidently say that there is not a single
word, phrase, or sentence either in the whole range of the Vedas and the principal Upanishads
or in the six systems of philosophy which represents the unreality of the world as has been
taught by Sankara. On the other hand, they plainly note the eternal existence of matter as is
seen in the Svetasvatara Upanishad “Jna Jnaou dva aja Isa anisa aja hyeka bhothru bhogarta
Yukta” where Prakriti is spoken of as unborn and ever-existent. And I can show you
innumerable other passages from other Upanishads in support of my statement, but I leave
them for fear of taxing your patience unnecessarily. As for the view which the other five
systems take of the nature of the world, a mere cursory glance into them will be sufficient to
convince you that they all take it as a substance of tangible reality, and that the very idea of
illusion or falsity is quite foreign to them. Here, of course, it might be argued that the
Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana do not accept the reality of matter but deny its very existence
as is clearly elucidated in the commentary of Sankara. But when once the commentary of
Sankara has been upheld as the highest and the only undisputed authority on the
interpretation of the Vedanta Sutras, it becomes very difficult for us to know the real meaning
of the Text to conceive that it is susceptible of being interpreted in another way. Most of the
older commentaries written by Bhagavan Bodhayana, Tanka, Dravida, Kapardin and
Guhadeva have not come to light, nor are the other commentaries of Nilakanta, Ramanuja,
Madhva, and Somanatha studied critically side by side with the commentary of Sankara. So
great is the prejudice on the part of our people that it is even deemed as a dire abuse to call in
question the claim of Sankara as the only right interpreter of the Vedanta Sutras. Why one
commentator should be chosen in preference to others without a proper and comparative
study of all, does not seem to strike most of us in this country. But see how an European
scholar Dr. Thilbaut in the critical essay prefixed to his able and accurate translation of
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Sankara’s commentary on the Vedanta Sutras shows the incorrectness of Sankara’s gloss and its inadequacy to bring out the real meaning of the Text. See how he declares that Sankara not only does not trace the meaning of the Sutras link after link in harmonious sequence in which the author’s ideas connect themselves but mangles the texts and twists their meanings in such a manner as to make them suit his own views. See also how this conclusion to which Dr. Thibaut was driven by his critical deliberation had been openly embraced by Prof. Max Muller in his ‘Life of a Ramakrishna’ and ‘Six systems of Indian Philosophy.’ Again, some of you will be surprised to learn that Swami Vivekananda the able exponent of modern Vedanta, expressed in his ‘Inspired Talks’ a similar opinion that Sankara instead of following the meaning of the Sutras, had made the sutras follow his meaning, his own views. Why, any impartial man who makes a profound study of the original, uninfluenced, of course, by any sectarian prejudice, will find in the Vedanta Sutras the doctrines of Sankhya assimilated and expounded, not based upon reason alone as had been done by Kapila but based upon the various passages of the Upanishads. The difference between Sankhya and Vedanta is that, while the one attempting to investigate everything from a purely rationalistic point of view stops with matter and individual self, the other goes a step forward venturing to treat upon the plane of a Supreme Self which is beyond the reach of all our limited reasoning powers and defective individual experience. But for this difference both Sankhya and Vedanta are identical, inasmuch as the inquiries into the nature of matter and individual soul from the common property of the two. So far, it is as clear as day light that my position in maintaining a continual flow of liveliness for the oldest doctrines of Sankhya in all the posterior systems of thought that arose in succession one after the other up to the time of Sankara when it was sadly and suddenly stemmed in but for a temporary period, is not one of an untenable character. And from the time of Saint Meikandadeva and Ramanuja of the Tamil country that mighty current of Sankhya has commenced again to run on with a redoubled force.

Now it might be asked what led Sankara to invent such a fanciful theory of illusion deviating farther and farther away from the plain and distinct track of the ancient Indian thought. I cannot venture to say anything definitely on what his real motive was, in the absence of any valid evidence to support it. Various explanations have been attempted to solve this problem, but unfortunately none of them gives satisfaction to my mind. It is possible that gross misconceptions might arise as a natural consequence of one’s inability to apprehend certain finer shades of meaning which certain terms in the Vedas and Upanishads possess. Need we wonder that these finer meanings escape at times even the searching intellects of eminent scholars while they reveal themselves to others, when we consider of the imperfect and limited condition of the human mind? There are a few words – though a few yet very important to a correct apprehension of the root-principles of ancient philosophy – repeatedly used in the Vedas, Upanishads and six systems, which puzzle even the highly cultured minds. Some of them I shall now explain to the best of my ability and leave others to your careful study. From this, it is by no means to be construed that I think myself abler than our able commentators and philosophers. Far from it, without possessing as much scholarship and keen intellect as our old commentators and philosophers had, we are nevertheless enabled to detect their errors and defects by the easy resources of knowledge which are made
accessible to us by the nature of the age in which we live. I believe you will not misunderstand me. With your kind permission I proceed to explain some of the few words just alluded to.

SAT AND ASAT.

At the outset I wish to take Sat and Asat – the two terms frequently used by Kapila to denote two different conditions of matter – because they gave rise to many misconceptions in after ages. Prior to the time of Kapila, these words had been used by the Vedic poets in the same sense in which Kapila used them. In the tenth mandala of the Rig Veda there is a verse which relates: “In the earliest age of the Gods Sat sprang from Asat.” And in the tenth part of the Atha va Veda it is said that “both Asat and Sat exist within the God Skamba.” The Taittiriya Upanishad also quotes a verse to the effect that “this was at first Asat; from that sprang Sat.” “With Kapila and his exponents, Sat denotes the existence of things in the manifold forms of the external world, the Daseyn of Hagel, the Natura Naturata of Sphinoza, and Asat is the opposite of this, or the formless Prakriti.” It is now plain to you from these that Sat means the manifested existence of this world and all material things and Asat the unmanifested existence of Prakriti or primordial matter.

When the existence of an object is perceptibly known, we are certain of its being and entertain no doubt about it. But, when it disappears from our view, we become uncertain of what its real situation would be, although we may have no inclination to say that it has been reduced to nothing, to a state of annihilation. All our modern scientific knowledge tends to show that matter is indestructible. Although an attribution of this scientific knowledge to our Sages in the prehistoric past may seem thoroughly unwarrantable and incredible, yet somehow or other, perhaps quite intuitively, they came to apprehend of this invariable law as is evident from the philosophy of Sankhya.

It is only in the primitive savage life that man can understand little of the disappearance of an object. His reasoning faculties were then in a latent condition and he was, therefore, not able to account for its disappearance nor had any means to guide him in the inferential process concerning its existence in an invisible form. So he knew nothing about it and probably believed that there was nothing beyond what he immediately perceived. There was no past nor future for him. Everything with which he was concerned was most intimately connected with his immediate needs and present requirements. This inability to comprehend what lies beyond was a necessary consequence of his undeveloped mental condition. But is it not strange that this form of savage life should repeat itself in the circles of materialistic and idealistic school of thinkers who assert that all except the present is a mere nonsense and that this world and all its contents are nothing but an outcome of pure illusion and idle fantasy? But our Vedic poets and philosophers were not as our present day materialists and idealists are. They were so far advanced in mental culture and correct methods of reasoning that with the help of the present they extended their vision of intellect far into the past and into the future and believed as the result of their careful observation as well in the unmanifested state of matter as in its manifested state. The one they called Asat, because of its invisible form and subtle character, and the other they called Sat on account of
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its visible shape and palpable condition. While such were the meanings of the two terms as conceived by the Vedic poets and subsequent thinkers, Sankara and his followers mistook them in a sense quite contradictory to all received traditions. Evidently Sankara took the term Asat to mean non-existence in contradistinction to Sat which means existence, and concluded as a matter of course that all the visible phenomenon of the universe was an elusive outcome of a principle which had not got an independent existence of its own but was a simple nothing as it were. According to him that which is the product of a nothing is also nothing, and it follows from that that the complete system of cosmos is a falsely woven fabric of wrong thought.

How anything can come out of nothing does not seem to strike him even for a moment, and he is swept away afar from truth by the torrent of his imagination. If before creation everything were null and void, which is quite inconceivable to a scientific mind, how are we to account for the vedic line “that both non entity and entity exist within the God Skamba”? How are we to account for the line in the Satapatha Brahmana that “in the beginning this universe was as it were and was not as it were”? Do not these sentences represent the manifested and the unmanifested states of matter. Do not these show that both cause and its effect are identical in so far as the existence of the one implies the existence of the other? This universe which is an effect of Prakriti and Prakriti which is the cause of this universe are so closely bound up together that the one necessarily and invariably involves the presence of the other. Hence the saying that “in the beginning this universe was as it were and was not as it were”. ‘This universe was’ indicates that it did not exist then in the same orderly form in which it is seen at present. That this passage and the foregoing ones are not susceptible of being interpreted in any other way so as to suit the illusion theory of Sankara is now quite apparent to you; and I, therefore, need not dwell upon this point any longer. From all these it should have been clear to you that the sense in which Sage Kapila used Sat and Asat in his thoroughly scientific system of philosophy is much in consonance with the usage of these terms by the Vedic poets and old philosophers and that the new significance which had been attributed to them by Sankara is in every way not in harmony with their oldest meanings and usages.

ADVITIYAM.

Now let us turn our attention for a while to another world of great philosophic significance – the word Advitiyam of the Vedic literature. In such passages as “Ekam Evadvitiyam Brahma” “Ekam eva Rudro nadvitiyayatdaste” this world has been taken by Sankara to mean the definite number one. The first of these two sentences as interpreted by him means that ‘Brahman is one, one only.’ In the Sanskrit language there is the word Ekam to denote the definite number one. And in almost all the languages of the world only one word is there to denote one single number and this law is not violated in the case of Sanskrit, for we have seen in it only one word Ekam for one, Dvitam for two, Tritham for three, Chaturtam for four and so on. But if we have to accept the meaning of Sankara, for the number one we shall have two words Eakm and Advitiyam instead of one quite contrary to the philological principle I have just pointed out to you.
The term Advitiyam is a compound word; and how Sankara takes this term to mean one by the process of splitting it into two parts and tracing out the sense of the two ingredients is very amusing to note. Advitiyam is divided into na and dvitiyam and the prefix na is made to mean no and dvitiyam two. If by its parts it would mean no two, the term Advitiyam must necessarily mean the denial of the existence of two objects. After coming to this skillful conclusion it is easier for him to argue that if the sacred scriptures deny the existence of two objects by making a frequent use of the term Advitiyam, it becomes our bounden duty to believe in the existence and reality of one only Brahman and the non-existence and unreality of all others.

But as it seems to me that this exposition of his contradicts the sense and spirit of all Vedic and Upanishad teachings I find it difficult to bring myself to believe in the correctness of his teaching and explanation. With all due deference to his greatness, we must, for the cause of truth, submit his meanings and arguments to a searching and critical examination. In the first place let us see whether he is correct in his etymological study of the term Advitiyam. I think he is not right in taking the prefix na in the sense of no, especially when it stands in union with numerals; because though that prefix may convey that meaning when it combines with other words denoting objects, it never signifies that sense when it stands in combination with numerals, but it clearly expresses another meaning of not. For example, when the prefix na is joined to the numeral Ekam which means one, the two become the compound word Anekam; and this term Anekam does not mean no one, but it means no one an equivalent of many. Similarly when the prefix na is united to the numeral Dvitham, the two must necessarily mean not no two but not two. But sadly this fact escaped the notice of Sankara. Does it not show the imperfect nature of the human mind that this simple fact of Sanskrit etymology eluded the intellectual grasp of so great a scholar as Sankaracharya?

Further Dvitham and Dvithiyam are not identical in meaning. Dvitham means two and Dvithiyam a two-fold state. It follows from this that nadvitiyam ought to mean a not-two-fold state. The peculiar function of this term Advitiyam is to express the exact relation in which the Supreme Being stands with the Universe. God is an omnipresent Being. And this nature in Him makes Him one with the world and the individual minds. Without his immediate presence not even a single atom can move of its own accord; without his simultaneous help no living thing can stimulate itself into activity; and without His inmost advice no human being can live even for a moment. Hence to endue each and all with life and activity He pervades the entire system of cosmos and individual minds. Though H thus exists one with the universe yet is He essentially different from it. And therefore this peculiar relation of His with mind and matter cannot be called either one or two. If He were not different from them how could there be either mind or matter? Or if He were different from them how could they move, think or have their very being? If He alone existed the Vedic poet would have said omitting the word Advitiyam ‘Evam eva Brahma’ ‘Brahma is the one only.’ Or if He existed farthest away from mind and matter then would he have said putting the word Dvitham ‘Dvitas eva Brahma’ that Brahman and the rest are two only. But he has clearly stated ‘Ekam evadvittyam Brahma’ Ekam eva Rudro nadvitiyayam daste’ thus adding the term Advitiyam and meaning there by that Brahman is the one only in a kind of not-two-state, that Rudra is
one only and is in a kind of not-two condition. Why? The relation of God is neither one nor two but a kind of not-two state. To express accurately this interrelation, neither the word ekam meaning one nor the word Dvitham meaning two would serve the purpose of the Vedic poet; and so he resorted to the aid of a third word Advitiyam in order to bring into a clearer light what he conceived of the relation that subsists between God and the universe. Now you see what those line “Ekam evadvitiyam Brahma” “Ekam eva Rudro na dvitiyaya taste.’ Indicated in the minds of the Vedic poets; that Brahma or Rudra who is one only without having a second being to be compared with it in any respect always exists with the universe in a kind of not-two relation is the real meaning of these Vedic texts. That this is the real meaning of the term advitiyam will be fully borne out by the etymological and philosophical expositions given of this word by saint Meykanda Deva of the Tamil country some six hundred years ago in his unique Tamil work of metaphysics—the Sivajnanabodha. That this passage and similar ones in which the word advitiyam occurs instead of lending any countenance to the illusion-theory of Sankara glitter like sharp sickles that cut down the very stalk of his doctrine at its root will be apparent to anyone who makes even a superficial study of the works of saint Meykandadeva and his disciples of the Saiva Siddhanta School. Nay anyone who enters upon a critical and comparative study of the oldest systems of philosophy, Upanishads and Vedas will see for himself that the term advitiyam itself establishes beyond all dispute the reality of matter and individual selves as was upheld by Sage Kapila in his thoroughly scientific system of Sankhya.

THE INDIVIDUAL SELVES.

The meager and very brief explanations that I have been able to lay before you regarding the Vedic terms Sat, Asat and Advitiyam would, I hope, be sufficient to call your attention to the highly important fact of fixing the real meanings of certain puzzling terms in the Vedas and Upanishads before proceeding to construct a system of philosophy out of them. Now I proceed to take up a much more important doctrine of Kapila – the doctrine of Individual Selves.

According the Kapila the Individual Self is an eternal and integral entity distinct from primordial matter or Mulapракрити and its effects. It is not a thing created out of nothing nor is it a hewn out fragment of Brahman or its reflection as is asserted by our modern Vedantin. Why is it nor so? Simply because nothing can be created out of nothing nor can the Omnipresent – unit of pure intelligence be cut off into limited parts of impure selves nor can it be made to reflect as so many miserable souls.

But by some it is argued that the creative energy of the Supreme Being is so tremendously powerful that it can at will create anything out of nothing. But such an argument reveals on their part a want of clear notion concerning the nature of creative function. Creation as we understand it in our daily experience is the action of an intelligent agent bent upon molding an already existent object in accordance with the requirements of his earthly life. For instance, the life of a schoolmaster requires some such furniture as blackboards, benches, tables, chairs and so on and he, therefore, asks a carpenter to have them done for him. What does the carpenter do? He fetches a big teak-wood, cuts it up into several
planks and different kinds of pieces and does all the necessary works of chiseling, smoothing, boring and uniting and creates in the end all that is required by the school master. Here without the fundamental part of teakwood the carpenter cannot proceed with his work however skillful may he be in executing that which he was required to do; but when once he obtains the teakwood, he immediately proceeds to change it into different size and shape and brings out all the required furniture in good time. Now apply this to the process of world-creation. The Individual Selves require the creation of bodies and the worlds. And the all graceful and all-merciful God acting upon the co-existing primary cause of matter Mulaprakriti evolves from it an infinite variety of corporal bodies and worlds and gives them to souls as temporary tenements. As with the carpenter so with the Lord. He cannot create this entire system of cosmos without its primordial cause the mulaprakriti; for creation means the law of causation, a continued succession of causes and effects. We can speak of creation with reference to matter, since every material effect has a substratum of its own material cause. But in the same sense we cannot speak of the creation of Souls as it is not possible to trace them to a common basic element of immaterial cause. The Selves are not blind, dead and unintelligent principles like matter, but they are distinctly different from it in being constituted of the essence of intelligence. You know perfectly well that intelligence is not a thing limited by space or time and that it is, therefore, not capable of being divided into parts and torn out into pieces. When it is assuredly impossible to limit intelligence and tear and divide it as if it were a bit of tangible matter how can you speak of the creation of souls as if they came out from a common source of intelligence?

And it has been already shown that God could not have created the Souls out of nothing, for every effect necessarily requires an antecedent cause. But some may deem it as attributing defect of God to say that he is utterly unable to create anything out of nothing. But I suppose that this mistaken notion arises by not distinguishing between the human power and the divine power. The difference between them is not one of quality but is simply of quantity, because qualitatively all forces whether human or divine must be alike in acting upon an object and producing in it a perceptible change. As regards the extent of difference between them in quantity it may be said that the Divine power is immeasurably and inconceivably greater than the other. If human power can only exert upon the little objects confined within this globe, the Divine power works upon the millions and billions of visible and invisible stellar worlds of which many are by countless degrees bigger than this earth—the Divine power the magnitude and illimitable extent of which man only imagine but cannot describe. No scientific mind can conceive of the difference between the two powers in any other way than that in which I have just explained. No intellect trained in the methods of correct reasoning can assent to the evidence-less assertion that God made the individual Souls out of nothing.

Again, one of the different classes of idealists might come forward to assure us that the souls are not several things created out of nothing but they are so many phases of one and the same unit of intelligence, the Supreme Being. But Sage Kapila meets this ingenious argument by bringing into our deep consideration certain undeniable facts of our life as ‘the separate allotment of birth, death and the organs, the diversity of occupations at the same
time, and the different conditions of the three Gunas’. Do we not see before our eyes every day, nay every minute and moment that while one soul is given to birth another soul passes away from this mortal life; while one is born with all organs perfectly symmetrical in shape another is sent with defective organs such as the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame and so on? Do we not see that while one is a master another is a slave, while one is a father another is a son, while one is rich another is poor, while one is a king another is a subject? And do we not also see that a while one is notorious for heinous crimes, hardness of feelings and a cruel heart, another is remarkable for his sublime virtues, tenderness of feelings and a benevolent heart? If God be the only unitary principle of life that manifests itself as the whole of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, such an infinite variety as is seen in them cannot be expected to exist but all must be of one nature and of one kind. Such being not the truth, Kapila lays it down as a fact of indisputable and undeniable character the existence of numerous individual Souls each and every one of them retaining a distinct self-consciousness eternally different from Mulaprakriti, the primordial cause of matter. Great as is the opposition of the modern Vedantin against this philosophy of reason and experience, still we cannot afford to forego the truth for the sake of others the truth that lay imbedded in the Vedas and earliest Upanishads the truth that had been brought to light by Sage Kapila of Sankya and by Saint Meikandadeva of Saiva Siddhanta. I think that it is our bounden duty to preserve the oldest traditions and doctrines about the actual conditions of our life especially when they are seen corroborated and maintained by our modern scientific knowledge. I think that it is fair – nay even an uprightness of character – to have everything old freely discussed in our educated circles without stealthily sliding away our convictions about grand truths, for fear of our stern and just behavior affecting the reputation of a certain individual philosopher as Sankara. I thing that it would be our greatness of mind and high sense of duty to show our gratitude and admiration towards such of our old philosophers as Kapila, Patanjali and Meykandadeva who did their utmost to represent to us things in their true light and open our mental vision. And I think that it is absolutely necessary that we should always be on our guard so that our appreciation of certain great thinkers may not distract us from a strict pursuance of truth.

POSITION OF SANKHYA AMONGST THE RELIGIONS.

So far In considered only the main doctrines of Sankhya leaving out of account its minute ones for fear of tiring your patience with a long discourse. Now let me proceed to state briefly the position of Sankhya amongst the other ancient systems of thought and the close relation which it bears towards Saiva Siddhanta and bring this lecture to a close.

We know it for certain that in the whole range of his system of thought not even once did Kapila allude to the existence of a Supreme Being. This remarkable absence of any allusion to God led many an European Scholar to make Kapila an atheist. In the absence of any positive evidence, it is quite unfair on their part to have assumed that Kapila was an atheist. You remember I said in the preceding part of this lecture that the system of Kapila was based upon pure reason alone. Our faculty of reason performs its functions only upon the physical and intellectual planes which are within the reach of our experience; it can distinguish one from the other or liken one object to another object either in the sphere of mind or in the sphere of matter. And all beyond the limits of these regions of mind and matter
The Relation of Samkhya and Saiva Siddhanta

do not come easy to the grasp of the reasoning faculty. Since the essential nature of God transcends all mind and matter and consequently all the reasoning powers of man, Sage Kapila left that question out of consideration dwelling simply on facts derivable from experience and solvable by reason. That God is beyond the comprehension of all finite intelligence is also of universal acceptance and even religions contradicting amongst themselves invariably admit this. Laid therefore under the difficult and impossibility of proving the existence and nature of God from reason alone, as Kapila went silently away without even touching on this extremely intricate problem, it is quite unsafe to advance any theory regarding his attitude towards that ultimate question. Further it would be an unwarranted assertion to say anything definitely on the religious inclination of Kapila, while we are in the dark having no means of ascertaining it. However it seems to me that Kapila maintained a position bordering on Agnosticism similar to that which is being held by some agnostics of recent times. Unlike the authors of other systems who based most of their arguments on the Vedic and Upanishad passages and wove their fabric of thought in strict union with their teachings, Kapila never recognized anything as authoritative except that which was comfortable to reason, never accepted the Vedas and Upanishads except in so far as they were in thorough agreement with reason. That is why his system alone is considered by the European scholars to be the true representative of the ancient Indian thought. That is why he alone is considered to be the true exponent of ancient Indian beliefs and a valuable repository of old traditional accounts.

Now as regards the relation of Sankhya to Saiva Siddhanta I venture to say that in all and every important respect they are identical. In accordance with the correct methods of reasoning Sankhya states that this world of multifarious forms and shapes is for that very reason evanescent and transitory and after a long and indefinite period of constant change it will dissolve again into a formless and shapeless state of matter called Prakriti. And the Saiva Siddhanta too upholds the same view about the present condition of this tangible world and of the intangible condition of its primal cause.

Then again the Sankhya maintains that the Avyakta or the unmanifested state of this primal cause is as much true as its Vyakta or manifested state. And the Saiva Siddhanta too speaks of these two states in much the same manner.

Again the Sankhya dwells upon the twenty three tattvas or entities which evolve from Prakriti one after another in close succession with increasing coarseness of form. And the Saiva Siddhanta too deals with the evolution of twenty three tattvas in the same remarkable manner.

Again the Sankhya reasons out a twenty-fifth principle as necessarily distinct from Prakriti and designates it as an intelligent Self possessing of clear individual consciousness. And the Saiva Siddhanta too closely argues the existence of an individual Soul different from matter and possessing of an eternal consciousness all its own.
And lastly the Sankhya argues the ever existence of not one such individual Soul but innumerable ones. And the Saiva Siddhanta too maintains the same view of countless individual egos that have a perpetual existence.

So far you see that Sankhya and Saiva Siddhanta are one in taking a correct view of the world manifest and unmanifest and in making a profound psychological study of numerous individual egos each of which having an eternal, integral and indestructible self-consciousness all its own. And you also see from this identity of these two systems, that the doctrines of Saiva Siddhanta entitle it to a claim of as great an antiquity as the system of Sankhya has.

Now the question would naturally occur to you what constitutes the difference between Sankhya and Saiva Siddhanta. You remember I have already told you that Kapila makes no mention of a Supreme Being in his Sankhya. But Saiva Siddhanta like the so called theistic Sankhya or yoga of Patanjali goes a step upward and maintains the existence of an all intelligent power from certain actual experiences of our inward life. To this great power it ascribes an invisible as well as a visible form of grace assumed by it not for its own sake but for the sake of sin-bound souls. By making his otherwise incomprehensible nature quite comprehensible to the souls through these forms of grace, the all-merciful Sivam delivers the souls from the bondage of ignorance, evil and misery and sets them forever in his unlimited bliss of supreme Love. Such are the main outlines that I have been able to draw of Sankhya and Saiva Siddhanta – the two most ancient cults of this vast continent of sages. It is my earnest hope that irrespective of all class and creed prejudices you would make a critical and comparative study of these two systems and bring more light from them than I have been able to do now. It is my earnest hope that being imbued with the knowledge of modern scientific culture you would be able to recognize and appreciate more than our orthodox scholars do the remarkable quest after truth which the two systems strenuously pursue in stringent logical and scientific methods, and that having recognized it you would stand against all temptations to lean on certain unscientific systems of thought that are current amongst the bigoted class of people. And it is my earnest hope that you would spread everywhere the principles of love and brotherhood, teach people to love God our eternal Father on a correct understanding of human life-ideals and actual experiences and illumine the darkest corner of the minds of our fellow countrymen by making them realize the glory of moral perfection and helping them to raise themselves to a level with the foremost nations of this globe. Om Sivam.